"PEACE BE STILL" -- IT WAS LATE AT NIGHT AND THERE WAS A VIOLENT STORM CHURNING THE SEA OF GALILEE. FROM OUT OF A BOAT CAME THESE WORDS, "PEACE, BE STILL" AND IMMEDIATELY THE WIND DIED DOWN AND THE WAVES CEASED.

IT HAD BEEN EVENING, THE SUN WAS ABOUT TO SET AND A LARGE CROWD FOLLOWED JESUS, WANTING TO BE HEALED, LISTENING FOR HIS WORDS OF TRUTH AND WISDOM. HE HAD TOLD HIS DISCIPLES THAT IT WOULD BE BEST IF THEY TRAVELED TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE, THERE WAS WORK TO DO THERE ALSO. SO THEY GOT INTO A BOAT, MARK SAYS THERE WERE A NUMBER OF LITTLE BOATS, AND STARTED ACROSS. THE BOATS WERE MORE THAN LIKELY FISHING BOATS, ABOUT AS BIG AS A GOOD SIZE ROW BOAT AND JESUS BEING VERY TIRED, QUICKLY FELL ASLEEP. THE SEA OF GALILEA IS ACTUALLY AN OVERSIZED LAKE AND NORMALLY IS ONE OF THE CALMEST BODIES OF WATER IN THE WORLD. BUT IN ITS PARTICULAR GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION IT IS FREQUENTLY SUBJECT TO RAPID AND VIOLENT STORMS. WITHOUT WARNING MASSES OF AIR FLOW DOWN FROM THE GREAT MOUNTAIN RANGE TO THE EAST, CHURN THE LAKE AND THE BLOW HARMLESSLY WESTWARD CARRYING WITH THEM LIFE GIVING MOISTURE. IT WAS THIS SITUATION THAT AROSE AS JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES WERE TRAVELING ACROSS THE LAKE THAT NIGHT.

WHEN THE STORM BECAME SO BAD THAT THEIR LITTLE BOAT WAS FILLING WITH WATER THE TERRIFIED DISCIPLES WAKENED JESUS FROM HIS SLEEP AND ASKED IF HE DID NOT CARE IF THEY DROWNED! IT WAS THEN THAT HE ORDERED THE SEA AND THE WIND TO BE CALM AND REBUKED HIS DOUBTING YET AMAZED DISCIPLES.

IN PROTESTANT CHURCHES OF OUR TRADITION THERE IS ONE SUBJECT UPON WHICH NOT MUCH IS SAID/ THAT IS THE MIRACLES/ AND ESPECIALLY THE NATURE MIRACLES/ OR THE ONES INVOLVING THE NATURAL LAWS OF THE UNIVERSE. THE MIRACLES ARE GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE A TOUCHY SUBJECT, ONE THAT IS BETTER LEFT ALONE. / PERHAPS I AM A LITTLE FOOL HEARTY IN MY YOUTH, BECAUSE I HAVE DECIDED TO DISCUSS THIS MOST MAGNIFICENT OF ALL THE NEW TESTAMENT MIRCALES THIS MORNING.

BEFORE I BEGIN LET ME POINT OUT THAT THE MIRACLES ARE A PHENOMENON PROBABLY ~~PROBLEM~~ THAT CANNOT EVER BE ~~SOLVED~~ UNDERSTOOD, THERE ARE QUESTIONS ASKED THAT SIMPLY DON'T HAVE ANSWERS. IN NO WAY WHATSOEVER/ DO I CLAIM TO HAVE AN INFALLIBLE ANSWER TO THESE QUESTIONS,/ ALL I HAVE IS A FAITH THAT THE MIRACLES/ LIKE THE REST OF THE BIBLE/ CONTAIN PROFOUND TRUTH,/ THE REVELATIONS OF GOD,/ DEEP AND RICH MEANING FOR EVERYONE OF US./ LIKEWISE, IT IS OUR JOB TO DISCUSS, TO QUESTION TO SEEK THAT MEANING. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ARE MUCH LIKE A VIEN OF COSTLY PRECISOUS GOLD. THE VIEN AT ~~XIMES~~ PLACES LIES RIGHT ON THE SURFACE. AT OTHER PLACES HOWEVER THE VIEN RUNS DEEP BELOW THE SURFACE/ AND IF WE ARE TO SEE IT WE MUST DIG DEEP, STRUGGLING TO UNDERSTAND./ AND OF COURSE THERE ARE PLACES WHERE THE VEIN RUNS SO DEEP THAT WE WILL NEVER RECOVER IT--IT SIMPLY GOES BEYOND OUR PROWERS OF REASON AND UNDERSTANDING./ AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE OBLIGATED TO ENGAGE IN THIS DIGGING, THIS MINING PROJECT./ THAT IS WHAT I HOPE WE CAN DO THIS MORNING: THINKING TOGETHER DELVE INTO THE DEPTHS

It's beauty readily available

SEARCHING THE TRUTH THAT IS IN THIS STORY, PERHAPS WE SHALL FIND IT, BUT PERHAPS WE SHALL DISCOVER THAT AT THIS POINT THE VEIN RUNS TOO DEEP, THAT IN OUR WEAKNESS AND IGNORANCE WE CAN NEVER FULLY HOPE TO KNOW WHAT IS MEANT HERE.

AT PRESENT THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT WAYS OF APPROACHING THE MIRACLES. ON THE ONE HAND IS THE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT CALLED CLASSICAL LIBERALISM. THIS VIEW SIMPLY DENIES THAT THERE WERE ANY MIRACLES; THE WRITERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MERELY MADE THEM UP IN ORDER TO CONVINCE THEIR READERS THAT JESUS WAS SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL. IF ONE PUSHES THIS LINE OF THOUGHT IT IS EASY TO SEE THAT SOON ALL THE MIRACLES AND HEALINGS ARE DONE AWAY WITH, THEN THE MIRACULOUS BIRTH AND OF COURSE THE RESURRECTION. ALL WE ARE LEFT WITH IS A GOOD MAN NAMED JESUS WHO TAUGHT NICE THINGS BUT IN THE LONG RUN WAS NO BETTER THAN ALBERT SCHWEITZER OR GHANDI.

STANDING CLOSE TO THIS SCHOOL ARE THE MODERATE LIBERALS. THERE VIEW IS THAT JESUS PROBABLY HEALED THE SICK, THEY USE AS EVIDENCE MODERN ACTS OF FAITH HEALING, AND THE RECENT DISCOVERIES THAT THE MIND WHEN PROPERLY EMPLOYED EXERCISES COMPLETE CONTROL OVER THE BODY. I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED IF THESE PEOPLE ACTUALLY BELIEVE THAT A DISTURBED MIND COULD WHIP UP A CASE OF LEPROSY. THIS SCHOOL OF THOUGHT STOPS AT THE NATURE M MIRACLES SUCH AS THE ONE WE ARE DISCUSSING TODAY. THESE ARE MIRACULOUS ACTS OF JESUS THAT CONTRADICTED THE WAY OF NATURE ACTS, SUCH AS WALKING ON WATER, CALMING A STORM OR MAKING WATER TURN INTO WINE. THEY POINT OUT THAT 2,000 YRS. AGO THERE

THEY POINT OUT THAT

WAS NO CONCEPTION OF A NATURAL LAW--A GIVEN ORDER OF THINGS. TODAY WE KNOW THAT THE UNIVERSE OPERATES ACCORDING TO CERTAIN NATURAL LAWS. WHEN THE HUMIDITY AND BARMETRIC PRESSURE ARE RIGHT THERE WILL BE PRECIPITATION. WHEN HYDROGEN AND OXYGEN ARE COMBINED IN THE RIGHT CONDITIONS THE RESULT (WITHOUT A DOUBT) WILL BE WATER. THESE ARE NATURAL LAWS, AND BECAUSE OF THEM THE LIBERAL SCHOOL MUST DENY THAT THIS MIRACLE OR ANY OTHER LIKE IT EVER HAPPENED.

amounts

THERE HAVE BEEN FEEBLE ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN THIS PHENOMENON BY CALLING IT A COINCIDENCE, THE STORM JUST HAPPENED TO EXPIRE AS JESUS SPOKE. THIS I THINK IS JUST NICE GUESS WORK AND NEED NOT BE CONSIDERED TOO SERIOUSLY.

THE ABOVE TWO VIEWS HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON, AN UNWAVERING FAITH IN HUMAN REASON.

THEY HOLD THAT

THERE IS NOTHING IN THE UNIVERSE THAT CANNOT BE EXPLAINED AND UNDERSTOOD. THUSLY ANYTHING THAT CONTRADICTS OUR REASON IS NOT TRUE. OUR MIND TELLS US THAT A STORM CANNOT BE SILENCED UNTIL IT HAS SPENT ITSELF SO THIS MIRACLES MUST NOT BE TURE.

AGAIN LET ME POINT HOW FIRMLY I BELIEVE THAT THE ~~XXXX~~ VEIN RUNS TOO DEEP TO MINE AT PLACES. THERE IS A REALM THAT IS OTHER THAN HUMAN AND ~~WE~~ OUR FRAIL MINDS SIMPLY CANNOT COMPREHEND.

ALWAYS

AT THE OPPOSITE END OF THE SCALE FROM THESE VIEWS IS THAT OF THE STRICT CONSERVATIVE OR OUT AND OUT FUNDAMENTALIST. THIS PERSON LOOKS TO THE BIBLE FOR HIS HISTORY, SCIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGY, FOR HIM THE VEIN OF GOLD LIES AT THE SURFACE FROM

BEGINNING TO END AND TO DIG IS WRONG. IF THE BIBLE SAYS GOD SLEW 185,000 ASSYRIAN SOLDIERS AND WE KNOW THAT THERE WERE NOT NEAR THAT MANY PEOPLE IN THE ENTIRE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE, THEN OUR FACTS ARE WRONG. THERE IS NO MEANING UNDERNEATH, JESUS CALMED THE STORM AND THAT'S THAT, TO THINK ABOUT IT TOO MUCH IS A SIN. ID DON'T WANT TO SPEND TIME ARGUING AGAINST THIS VIEW BECAUSE ITS LIMITATIONS ARE TOO OBVIOUS, BUT LET ME STICK IN ONE QUESTION. IF ALL THE STORY MEANS IS THAT JESUS HAD THE POWER TO STILL THE STORM THEN WHY DOESN'T HE STILL A FEW OF THE MONSOONS THAT KILL HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF ASIANS EVERY YEAR. IF Sum WHY DOESN'T HE ELIMINATE THE ICE AND SNOW THAT ACCOUNT FOR A COUNTLESS NUMBER DEATHS. (DOESN'T HE CARE?) IS GOD OBLIVIOUS TO HUMAN SUFFERING? AS YOU CAN SEE THIS VIEW IS HARDLY ADEQUATE. THE PERSON WHO ACCEPTS EVERYTHING IN THE BIBLE, WORD FOR WORD, WITHOUT QUESTIONING IS NOT PICKING UP THE PRECIOUS GOLD IN THE VEIN--ALL HE HAS IS THE SOIL WHICH BEARS EVIDENCE THAT THERE IS GOLD BELOW.

SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THESE TWO EXTEMES IS THE POSITION WE MUST TAKE, WILLING TO DIG, TO THINK AND TO STRUGGLE, KNOWING THAT THERE IS PROFOUND TRUTH TO BE HAD: BUT NEVER FORGETTING THAT WE CAN NEVER UNDERSTAND ALL. AT PLACES THE VEIN GOES TOO DEEP.

I CANNOT DICTATE TO YOU HOW YOU MUST HANDLE THE MIRACLES BUT I CAN AND HAVE TRIED TO MAKE YOU THINK ABOUT THEM SERIOUSLY. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS IT IS A PERSONAL THING, ONE WHICH MUST BE RESOLVED BY EACH ONE OF US.

NOW LET'S GO BACK TO THE PLACE WHEN WE BEGAN DIGGING AND SEE IF WE CAN DISCOVER THE MEANING THAT IS THERE. THE DISCIPLES HAVE WAKENED JESUS IN THE MIDST OF A GREAT STORM AND ONE HAS SAID TO HIM"TEACHER, DO YOU NOT CARE IF WE PERISH?"

THE DISCIPLES WERE SCARED AND RIGHTLY SO, WE WOULD BE TOO. THEY WERE NEAR PANIC AND IN WAKENING JESUS THEY TRIED TO COMMUNICATE THEIR FRIGHT: THEY TRIED TO INCLUDE HIM IN THE PANIC OF THE MOMENT. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE DONE THIS? HOW OFTEN DO WE TRY TO INCLUDE GOD IN OUR FRIGHT? HOW MANY OF OUR PRAYERS ARE "PANIC PRAYERS?" WHEN WE ARE FACED WITH A CRISIS*--PERSONALLY OR NATIONALLY THE FIRST THING WE THINK IS THAT GOD DOESN'T CARE, HE MUST BE SLEEPING/AND WE TRY DESPAREATELY TO WAKEHIM UP TO TO INCLUDE HIM IN OUR PREDICAMENT. IN THE TIME OF WAR WE FEEL THAT GOD OUGHT TO BE FRIGHTENED WITH US--RIGHT NOW WE WOULD LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT GOD IS AFRAID OF COMMUNISM OVER RUNNING THE WORLD, OR OF ATOMIC ANNIHILATION. SUCH THINKING IS BLIND TO THE TRUTH THAT GOD DOES NOT SHARE OUR PANIC. LIKE A FATHER, HE PITIES HIS CHILDREN, HE IS SYMPATHETIC TO THEIR PROBLEMS AND TROUBLES BT HE IS NOT AFRAID LIKE THEY ARE.

ONE OF THE PROFOUND JOYS OF CHILDHOOD IS THE COMFORT IN A FATHERS CONFIDENCE/I CAN VIVIDLY REMEMBER A PARTICULAR TEACHER OF MINE WHO, DURING THE WAR DAYS AFTER DAY WOULD TELL US HOW TERRIBLE IT WOULD BE IF GERMANY WON, SHE DWELT ON THE HORRORS OF NAZISM IN DETAIL/AND AT 3:30 EVERY DAY I WOULD BE QUITE A FRIGHTENED LITTLE BOY.

WHEN I GOT HOME I WOULD BARE MY SOUL TO MY FATHER, TELLING ALL I HAD HEARD FROM MY TEACHER, BUT FOR SOME REASON HE NEVER SHARED MY PANIC. WHAT A COMFORT IT WAS TO FEEL THAT MY FATHER WAS NOT AFRAID. THIS SAME COMFORT CAN BE OURS IF WE REALIZE THAT GOD DOESN'T SHARE OUR PANICK, OUR PRIVATE FRIGHT/ JESUS WAS WITH HIS DISCIPLES AS THEY WERE TOSSED ABOUT BY THE HOWLING WIND, BUT HE WASN'T FRIGHTENED, AS A MATTER OF FACT HE WAS RESTING. IT IS THE SAME ALWAYS, IN OUR COMPANY ALWAYS IS ONE THAT ISN'T AFRAID. GOD PARTICIPATES IN EVERYTHING WE DO, BUT IN OUR DARKEST MOMENT HE IS NOT AFRAID. PAUSE WE SHOULD BE AFRAID AT PRESENT AS WE FACE THE POSSIBILITY OF ATOMIC WAR, BUT INSTEAD OF DRAGGING GOD INTO OUR FRIGHT WE CAN DO BETTER TO LET HIS PRESENCE COMFORT US. JUST AS THE PRESENCE OF JESUS IN THE BOAT BROUGHT PEACE AND CALM TO THE DISCIPLES/ HIS PRESENCE CAN DO THE SAME FOR US.

A CONTEMPORARY PLAY RIGHT HAS QUIPPED "THAT WITH ALL OUR TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCED MECHINIZATION NO ONE HAS YET INVENTED A MACHINE THAT WILL PRODUCE PEACE AND QUIET." SINCE THAT TIME THERE HAS BEEN SUCH AN INVENTION THERE IS A STEREOPHONIC RECORD ON SALE, OF ABSOLUTE AND UTTER SILENCE AND PEOPLE ARE BUYING IT. THE POINT IS THAT OUR LIVES/ OUR MINDS AND SPIRITS ARE CHURNED BY GREAT STORMS/ WE ARE TOSSED ABOUT BY WORRIES AND FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS, BY FAMILY PROBLEMS AND WORK PROBLEMS./ OUR LIVES COMPARE VERY FAVORABLY TO THE SEA OF GALILEA.

ONE OF THE DEEP MEANINGS WE FIND IN THIS STORY IS THAT PEACE CAN BE OURS, WE CAN BE CALM BECAUSE GOD IS NEAR. IN THIS CONTEXT THIS STORY OFFERS ENCOURAGEMENT BEYOND COMPREHENSION. IN ALL OUR TROUBLE IN THE ANXIETY AND GNAWING WORRY ABOUT WHAT TO MORROW WILL BRING, IN THE TRAGEDY OF THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE, IN ANY SITUATION AT ANYTIME THE WORDS PEACE, BE STILL CAN BE HEARD IN THE LIFE THAT IS OPEN TO THEM.

WE ARE NOT ALONE IN THE LITTLE BOAT THAT IS OUR LIFE. GOD IS IN IT WITH US. IF WE KNOW AND BELIEVE THAT WE NEED NOT BE AFRAID. THE WORDS THAT RESOUNDED OVER THE LASHING WAVES OF THE GALILEAN SEA AND THEN ECHOED IN THE PEACEFUL CALM CAN COME TO US--PEACE BE STILL.

AMEN.